

inclination to go NW after a few miles, I realised that we had gone wrong. A couple of Chinese, who were carrying branches on carts drawn by oxen, pointed out a large ruin about 7 miles to the S, on the W of which the right road ran. There was nothing for it but to ride there. This was rather heavy work for the horses which kept breaking through the porous ground. The sweat poured off them and they made slow and laborious headway.

After quite 2 1/2 hours' heavy going we reached the ruin, two massive clay walls, about 9 fathoms high, enclosing two more or less square pieces of ground, one about 3 times the size of the other. The smaller one, the walls of which are considerably higher and equipped with small, turret-shaped massive corner bastions of clay, lies just outside the NE corner of the larger ruin. The part of it facing N had disappeared to a great extent. Outside the S part lie remains of a smallish annexe. There are slight bastions on some of the corners. It is all reminiscent, on a small scale, of the walls of Idygot shahr. A small deserted Chinese impanj had been built with the smaller ruin as a base.

While we were looking for the track, I caught sight of a flock of dsjerans or kiyiks (burkak in the Sart language, qarakuiruk in Kirghiz), 7 in number, grazing close to the south wall. After searching for a time I found a means of getting to the top of the wall, but the shy creatures had scented danger and started off. I got a good sight of them, however, about 400 metres beyond and sent four shots after them. They continued to retreat, but two were evidently wounded and only moved on slowly with long halts. I called to Lukanin to set off after them, but on the porous ground this was easier said than done. He only got one of them, a female, hit by two bullets. With a couple of the pheasants that abound around Ansi, shot earlier in the day, this will be a welcome change from our monotonous diet.

Loading our bag on the back of a horse, we set off to find the right track. Of three tracks going in a SSW direction we chose the one that bore the clearest signs of wheels, horses and mules, and set off. The sun sank lower and lower and finally dropped below the horizon. The wonderful, warm air of the day was succeeded by quite perceptible cold that was heightened by an evening breeze. The surface of the desert was very uneven here and, as if torn and tumbled by unknown forces, had taken on inexplicably fantastic shapes that limited the view very much. We looked in vain for a signal light and stopped from time to time in the hope of hearing a dog bark. The deathlike silence that enveloped us was only broken by the sighing of the wind and in the moonlight the plain, with the shadows of its bizarre shapes, seemed like a gigantic cemetery. When we had ridden for a few hours it became evident that we had again taken the wrong road. We were completely at a loss. Our signal shots evoked no reply. There might have been water quite close to us, but it might just as well have been dozens of miles away. To ride back to the nearest village would have been a matter of 4—5 hours. While I stood considering the situation, I caught the sound of an unwieldy native cart at a great distance. The sound drew nearer and after a time we saw a cart that had come from the sarai, where my men had camped. In another 2 1/2 hours we reached it at last. The excellent fellows had eaten their pälaw and gone to roost, Djan wrapping himself in my blankets in order to keep them warm, so he said, purely out of consideration for his master. I need scarcely add that their rest was neither long nor sweet.